



Monterey County District Attorney's Office Cold Case Task Force

Unidentified Human Remains Identified Using Investigative Genetic Genealogy

In October of 2023, the DA's Office Cold Case Task Force, working directly with the Monterey County Sheriff's Office Coroner Division and the California Department of Justice DNA Lab, has identified the remains of a man who was lost at sea in 2001.

On August 11th, 2001, 50-year-old Richard Rader II motored solo out of Bodega Bay on his 40' fishing vessel the "Robert Croll." It was the last time anyone would see him. He was reported missing 6 days later.

After a massive open ocean search by the Coast Guard, the fishing vessel was found adrift in the ocean, 26 miles west of Morro Bay. It was unoccupied, out of fuel, the batteries were dead, and there were no fish. There was also no sign of Rader.

In 2003, a local fisherman in Monterey Bay pulled up a human skull in a fishing net. No identification of the remains were initially made.

In 2023, the Cold Case Task Force was working directly with the Monterey Sheriff's Office Coroner Division to attempt to identify every unidentified human remains case where evidence was still maintained. A portion of the skull was sent to the California Department of Justice DNA lab to attempt to extract enough DNA for a possible comparison with the state MUPS DNA databank.

Using modern extraction methods, this proved successful, and Rader was positively identified in October of 2023. A review of multiple newspaper articles in 2001 revealed there was an extensive search for both Rader and his vessel.

See page 2 for one of the newspaper articles outlining the search for the missing fisherman.

MORRO BAY

Missing boat found, towed

WIDE SEARCH
TURNS UP EMPTY
VESSEL, NO CAPTAIN

BY NEIL FARRELL
THE TRIBUNE

A commercial fishing vessel that may have been lost for nearly two weeks was found abandoned and adrift Wednesday some 26 miles west of Morro Bay.

A Coast Guard search plane spotted the commercial fishing vessel, the Robert Croll, around 10:30 a.m. A Coast Guard motor lifeboat from Morro Bay towed the mystery-shrouded ghost ship into the harbor.

The vessel and Capt. Richard Rader II, 50, had been the subject of a search since Aug. 17 when his father reported him overdue to Bodega Bay. Coast Guard planes, helicopters and boats had searched from the Farrallon Islands, northwest of San Francisco, south to the Channel Islands. A bulletin was radioed to all vessels to look out for the Robert Croll and its captain.

A C-130 plane out of Sacramento, checking out a reported sighting by a coastal freighter, finally

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Ship

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spotted the boat, but there was no sign of Rader.

Petty Officer Leslie Kraushaar of the Coast Guard Public Affairs Office in Alameda said Rader left Bodega Bay on Aug. 11. He was fishing alone.

Morro Bay Chief Mike Saindon said the engine was off and the boat's batteries were dead when they reached the vessel. The Coast Guard, as part of its investigation, planned to check the fuel tanks to see if the boat burned all its fuel before the en-

gines died.

"It had been drifting for a while," Saindon said when they arrived at the boat.

Coast Guard aircraft from San Francisco, Los Angeles and Sacramento resumed the search for Rader at dawn Thursday morning, covering a roughly 220-mile stretch of coastline. Kraushaar was unsure how long the search would continue.

Though winds offshore have been heavy in recent days, Kraushaar said the conditions weren't too bad on Wednesday.

"It's hard to say what happened," said Saindon. There were no fish on board the boat, and no gear was

in the water when they reached the boat. Saindon said that could indicate Rader never made it to his fishing grounds.

He added the boat carried no life raft and didn't even have a place where one could be mounted. "He didn't have all his survival gear," said Saindon.

The boat's Emergency Positioning Indicator Radio Beacon was in place and hadn't been activated, said Saindon, and no Mayday signal was heard from Rader.

The boat, a 40-foot, wooden-hulled fishing vessel, appeared undamaged as it lay tied to the floating dock at the North T-pier in Morro Bay.

Oakland Tribune, August 24, 2001